town and country church

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DEPARTMENT OF TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH · NCC ·

Purposes: To encourage cooperation among rural churches • to improve local church administration in organization, finance, education, community relations, and lay leadership training • to help develop a Christian philosophy of rural life embracing ethical issues in agriculture, social reconstruction, and government

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Cover

Cover photo, by Herbert Lanks, from Black Star, shows the view from the old covered bridge on the Swatara Creek, Dauphin County, Pennsylvania.

In this issue . . .

• Paul Keene asks, "What about Penns Creek, Pennsylvania?" This village—its problems, needs, and uncertain future—demands a closer look and better answer than has been brought forth thus far. This issue suggests some answers to this and all the other Penns Creeks throughout the land today.

In speaking to the needs of the churches in the northern Great Plains, Arthur Achtemeier is convinced that there is a "Mission to the Church" which is part of the answer.

The "Message to Panurbia" which Robert Clingan proclaims should not only be heard by "them" but should serve to encourage the small places of our nation. In dealing specifically with the important values of rural life this message must not go unheard or unheeded if the good life is to prevail.

You will note that both convocations this year are vitally concerned with the small church and community. We have given major space to the Maine Convocation only because it comes a month earlier than the Texas Convocation and, as usual, our space is limited. Each Convocation will be equally significant and, in being regional, will be definitely relevant.

By the way, have you ordered your supply of the Harvest Festival bulletin?

William Davidson is one of the keenest observers of the rural scene and what he has to say about "The Church's Place in Rural Development" makes a great deal of sense; how about it, Penns Creek?

A call has gone forth from the town and country department of the United Church of Christ, and it sounds like we should be "somewhere list'nin' for my Lord"!

Yes, there is something that can be done! And reading the books suggested this month will furnish any pastor or layman with enough ideas and projects to keep him busy for a long time—maybe even a lifetime.

For the few who have been denied the privilege of hearing in person Clarence Jordan (the author of this year's Harvest Festival service) we have included a brief word about him and a short sermon—the implications of which could revolutionize your approach in social action. ■ ■

Contributors of articles to TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH speak for themselves and not for the National Council of Churches or sponsoring organizations.

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What About

PENNS CREEK, PENNSYLVANIA?

by

Paul K. Keene

• It is just what you would expect. You can see it now—a small, retiring, rather unpainted little village, off the main routes. Snuggled against the bosom of Jacks Mountain, its outskirts are bordered by the lovely stream from which it takes its name. It is said that William Penn once owned most of the land hereabouts, when the buffalos roamed our valleys. Four hundred people live in the village, with six hundred more in the surrounding township. These figures have changed but little in the fifteen years that we have lived on and operated our farm, just two fields removed from the village.

Little Cooperation

There are three Protestant congregations—an Evangelical United Brethren, and a union Lutheran–Reformed—meeting in two church buildings in the village. Outside the village in the township there are two more EUB churches, a small Holiness church, and parts of a God's Missionary Alliance group and a Jehovah's Witness group. There may be a total of four hundred "active" members in all of these. The ministers are fearfully divided. Almost all have multiple-point parishes. Some live in larger centers. They have little time beyond the bi-weekly sermon really to enter into the lives of the community or the people.

Each church group pushes its own feeble program, with small areas of cooperation. Those with centers in another town would like to draw in members from the outlying churches. From their standpoint it is the best solution. Yet our children go to the new elementary school in Penns Creek, or to high school in a third town. They do not know the children in the central church group. The adults are reserved and withdrawn. Very few will go into a different church among strangers whom they never meet otherwise. It is not a solution for us. It would be, rather, extinction for the church and a further weakening of community bonds.

Synod and conference leaders are concerned. The majority seem to feel that there are not many choices. "Is it such a large problem after all?" they ask. All figures show that concentrated growth and bigness are the only answers our modern society has found and can appreciate. Isn't the whole movement of society one of absorption of the smaller by the larger? There will always be small, backward areas like this, caught up in some quaint, quiet corner, far away from the mainstreams of life. What if a few more generations go by before they too are swept into the current? Let them stay as they are, merge to hope for a little more pastoral leadership, or disband to join churches in larger centers. . . . Only here and there does a voice speak up for something better, something finer for the rural church!

The Sects Are Ready

We can tell you what you already know—of the multitude of small but growing sects that are lying in wait. As the force of the older established churches dwindles (a disenchantment from within, so to speak); as ministers must spend, or choose to spend, more time with reports, meetings, conventions, conferences, workshops, camps, ministeria, etc., with less time for living what they already know—so the churches in Penns Creek meet fewer and fewer of those needs which the people still feel—not to mention those needs which are not felt any more, or yet!

People often find their questions answered, their needs met, by a friendly Bible student, who is deeply concerned with them and who has much time to spend. Here it is the poor, lonely, burdened individual who is important, and not a faraway conference. Where else can even our young people turn for help, appreciation, understanding, advice?

Last year we showed a film which dealt with the grandeur of the growth of the church in suburban areas. We could feel proud to be a part of the reaching of these places with splendid new buildings—to have a share, through our benevolences, in this spreading of the kingdom. Those of us who saw the film

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Paul Keene has been a lay Methodist missionary in India and now operates Walnut Acres—an organic farming enterprise providing natural-food products by mail.

felt warmed. We murmured approval as we left our own, our precious, homely little church. But deep in our hearts there was registered a hurt.

Grow at the top and die at the bottom! Take from those who have not, perhaps through no fault of their own, and give to those who have. Let the feeble, expiring bottom, as long as any movement is felt, help to feed the burgeoning top. The church must go on—we must move with the age. We know what to do with the top. It is easy to move with power and prestige and wealth and bigness. The bottom is the problem—poor, weak, lonely, stubborn—almost unloved and unwanted. Yes, smallness is awkward, frightening, embarrassing. . . . We don't know if we are one of the roots of society, but we sometimes wonder. We do know that somehow we are at the bottom.

Smallness Can Count

Small though we be, we still know almost instinctively that size and power and importance do not of themselves automatically guarantee quality of living. We are glad that the Master of men came out of and spent His life working with the smallnesses. His were the person-to-person, face-to-face situations. It is significant the it was Jerusalem that could not abide Him? It is reassuring for us to remember that God himself speaks through the hush of the small voice.

Perhaps small things *do* count, their disappearance heralding the beginning of the downfall of a culture. Perhaps no nation is genuinely stronger than its rural communities and culture. William James adds mightily to our comfort, of course, when he writes, "As for me, my bed is made; I am against bigness and greatness in all their forms, and with the invisible molecular moral forces that work from individual to individual. . . ." We are cheered by the works of Arthur Morgan and Baker Brownell, and a host of others.

Who Will Lead?

Urban areas, with their exaggerated demands and superior ways, unwittingly skim us each day, each year, each generation, of the best of our soil, our labor, our children, our minds, our spirits. In a sense they stand on us to rise. Oh, there are some rural areas more wide awake than ours, but there are tremendous reaches where the need is similar to ours. We know that some of our rural people want to grow. They sense the crumbling of the wall, the shifting of the once secure footing. Their certainty in the security of the old ways has been shaken. They look for a guiding hand. Through having been accepted members of the group for so many years, we know that the time is here for something better. Is there a solution for us, or are we beyond hope? Must we watch the strength which helped to give this country so much of its nobleness and fiber pass undignifiedly away? Is there anyone to lead us? ■ ■

Now Available

Order of Service for

HARVEST FESTIVAL 1961

• This year's bulletin has been written by the Rev. Clarence Jordan, PH.D., director of Koinonia Farm, Americus, Georgia. The Language of the service opens up depths of spiritual power and simplicity that greatly aid the celebration of this important festival. The bulletin also features the full text of a new rural stewardship hymn, "As men of old their first fruits brought."

• The bulletin has an appropriate cover picture of 'mums and "The Angelus," is printed on quality paper in a rich autumn tone, and can be secured for 5¢ each or $2.50 per hundred from:

Office of Publication and Distribution
National Council of Churches
475 Riverside Drive
New York 27, New York

• Note: All those who order the bulletin this year will also receive an especially prepared benediction by Clarence Jordan suitable for framing.

THE MISSION TO THE CHURCH

by Arthur R. Achtemeier

• We are not revealing any secrets when we say that the rural pastor of today is faced with a dwindling population within his community. The census figures reveal this dramatically. The family farm is in trouble and the number of farm families is diminishing. Farm units are getting larger, small towns are becoming smaller and in some cases disappearing entirely. Granted, there is also an increasing number of non-farm people moving into many of our rural areas. This non-farm group brings with it its own problems into the average community. Often these non-farm people are in, but not of, the community. They send their children to the public schools, but own very little property to supply tax money to run the schools. Most of their interests lie in, and most of their trading is done in, the city.

The Farm-City

Some rural sociologists are asking whether the next development is the farm-city. Not too long ago we heard a good deal about the county-seat church, and this is still very much in the picture. But this farm-city idea involves the consolidation of counties so that the newer political divisions would consist of an area extending about fifty miles in every direction of such a farm-city.

If that is the next development, will all farmsteads be concentrated along the all-weather roads, the farmsteads being located about three or four miles apart? Or will the road system radiate from the farm-city roughly as spokes from the hub of a wheel? Fantastic? Perhaps. But let me remind you of some of the changes which have taken place during the last fifty or even the last twenty-five years. The one-room school has disappeared almost entirely. We are told that the high school which graduates less than fifty pupils per year is on the way out. Where is the small, country cheese factory, the small cream station, the small-town depot agent?

The Lean Years

There is neither the time nor the need to pursue this dwindling population topic further, but one of the very real problems which this situation of the decreasing population brings with it demands attention. Most of our denominational programs are geared to a "growing community" and "increasing constituency" and "expanding income" of the people. The rural pastor entrusted with the task of promoting such a program is confronted by a shrinking constituency and a declining per capita income. And the very programs and agencies which are designed to help the pastor in his parish now become a source of frustration. They become a liability, not an asset. (He is not one of the one-hundred per centers.)

It takes a really good minister to sell the church program which calls for an ever increasing contribution to a farmer or a rancher during a season of sustained drought, which in some areas has continued as much as five to seven years. And yet this is exactly the task with which the town and country pastor, especially of the Great Plains, is confronted from time to time. Our promotional denominational programs make no provisions for, nor do they offer re-

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The Rev. Mr. Achtemeier is the Dakota-Rocky Mountain area missionary for the United Church of Christ.

lief during, lean years, and the rural pastor does not find himself or his congregation among the one-hundred per centers.

Declining Income

Financing the church program in the small rural church, again especially in the Plains area, may very well become increasingly more difficult. Recurring drought, with total lack of income, and continuing demands of rigid and fixed costs of equipment and services, taxes, fuel, electricity, phone, medical care, education—these rigid and fixed costs, which are on the up-grade, make financing the church extremely difficult. The budget is not met, the apportionment is not paid, often the pastor is literally forced to find another charge. His living expenses are constantly going up, but his income does not keep pace. This is the kind of cost-price squeeze to which the rural church is subjected. The institutional services and the church program are constantly becoming more and more expansive and the individual rural church member is faced with a declining income.

Migration of Youth

But enough of this. The fact of the dwindling population with which the rural pastor is faced points up another problem. Rural communities have always exported and continue to export their youth. At the present time, in some cases two out of three, in others three out of four, in still others four out of five farm-raised youngsters will not remain in the area. This means that 66 or 75 or 80 per cent of the children in your Sunday school, in your confirmation classes will not remain in your community to become adult members of your congregation. This is bad for your church growth prospects. It is discouraging. What's the use of building a strong Christian education program. Our church does not reap any of the long-range benefits from it, any way.

But the church of Jesus Christ *is* reaping the benefit. You are training members for the city church, for the industrial community, and this should be taken into consideration when you think of and plan for an educational program. In a very real sense, the folks in the rural churches must counteract, or guard against, what Rollo May says is "the central human problem facing the church," namely, "a vast loss of meaning, a psychological emptiness, a spiritual aimlessness." He continues, "Against this kind of hell, only a renewed church can realize the promise delivered to Peter by the Master."

Defeatist Attitude

Another problem which plagues the rural pastor is the difficulty of getting adequate leadership, and this is more or less directly related to the dwindling population. The more ambitious, more alert youth leave the community to seek their fortunes elsewhere. One is apt to find a defeatist attitude brought on by the shrinking population and the dying towns. What is often coupled with this attitude, making it even more formidable, is the lack of a cooperative spirit among the churches. The residents of the vicinity cooperate in many enterprises, but often refuse any types of cooperative effort among the churches.

Lack of Pastoral Continuity

A serious problem caused by the frequent changes of pastorates is the lack of continuity of program. Far too often the success or failure of the actual program of the town and country church depends on the individual pastor. Admittedly the pastor is the key man in every rural church situation, but that is not what I have in mind. Far too often, when the individual "successful" pastor moves away, the program moves with him. No one would plug for drab uniformity; there is room and need for individuality and imaginative initiative on the part of the pastor in effective church program development. I am maintaining that the program must grow with and out of the group being served. Much of the strategy and oversight of the growing, on-going program must become the responsibility of local leadership. This will slow down the program, but it will then become the program of the group and not only of the pastor.

The Value of Denominational Boards

It is in the development of such an indigenous, on-going program that the denominational boards and agencies become really significant. They provide this element of continuity. The new pastor takes up where the former pastor left off, and he is not unfamiliar with the program because he was administering one very similar to this one in his former parish. Even during a vacancy, the people who have been trained to participate in such an on-going program can carry on because they know where they are going and why.

In this connection, rural pastors should take every advantage of attending conferences, in-service training, workshops offered by the various boards and agencies of their denominations.

Even the much maligned and despised quarterly and annual reports have real value in developing such an on-going program. However obnoxious and boresome they sometimes appear to be, these reports make a very substantial contribution to provide for adequate continuity. Such reports compel planning and frequent evaluation. The succeeding pastor knows what has been done and what has been neglected.

Renewal of the Church

Someone has said, "The mission of the church now has its widest frontier within the boundaries of the Christian community itself. The mission *of* the church has become the mission *to* the church." Not only must we strive to bring non-Christians into the church of Christ, we must try to get the present members to become more Christian in action and attitude.

A religion easily professed is incapable of supplying us with the necessary power to resist the evils of our day. It is because of a situation such as this that the department of town and country church of the United Church of Christ has adopted as the quadrennial emphasis "The Renewal of the Church." Says the Rev. Shirley Greene, "My own observation is that most of the ambi-

(*Continued on page* 15)

Message to Panurbia

by Robert L. Clingan

• We have been observing the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of the report of Theodore Roosevelt's Commission on Country Life. The chairman of the commission was Liberty Hyde Bailey, the grand old man of Cornell University. Dr. Bailey was a philosopher, as well as a biological scientist and an educator. He was a deeply religious person, and both his religion and his philosophy are reflected in his book called *The Holy Earth.* In that book he declares that the people who live near the backgrounds of life upon the earthfield, forest, and sea have values that the rest of society needs. Those who live in rural communities have an understanding of life they must share with the rest of their society.

Martin E. Marty, a suburban pastor writing in *The Christian Century,* refers to our emerging monolithic culture as "panurbia." What message do rural people have for modern panurbia? What are some of the society-saving ideas, very much at home in a rural community, worth communicating to the rest of our American society?

Living Is a Struggle

First of all, the man who lives next to the backgrounds of life upon the earth knows that *life is a constant struggle.* One day when I was living in Arizona, a layman took me with him on a trip across the desert. On the edge of our community he pointed out the barely visible check ridges of land once farmed and now returned to the desert. How quickly land not cared for returns to its original state or, if eroded, a condition far worse. One may observe a similar development in New England. Not far from Boston are hills covered with trees that were once hill-top farms. When the Erie canal and finally the midwestern railroads were built, these farms could not compete and they went out of production. In less than a hundred years the land has returned to its natural state.

Anyone with a vegetable garden knows the struggle a person must make to keep his garden from being dominated by the natural plants the gardener calls weeds. This struggle of nature to reclaim its own use of the land spells out to the farmer that life is a constant struggle, and there is no substitute for work. This understanding of life is badly needed by our civilization. The other evening I heard a judge of the Denver court of human relations, which includes juvenile offenders, declare that one of the reasons for the delinquency we encounter today is that people are led to believe one may get something for nothing. They have forgotten that life is a constant struggle, and men must work for every step of human progress. This knowledge needs to be even better understood by our rural people and communicated to the rest of our society.

Life Has Its Cycles

A second idea best understood by rural people and worth communicating to the rest of our society is the knowledge that life has its ups and downs, its seasons and its cycles. The writings of the book of Ecclesiastes, particularly the third chapter, make sense to the man living in a rural community. In this great chapter of our Bible the writer declares, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up."

The man who lives close to this background of earth, knows there is a time to plant and a time to harvest. He knows that everything has its seasons. He knows that there is a time to save and a time to spend, a time to invest and a time to be conservative about investments. Every member of a rural community, whether he is a farmer or a businessman or professional man serving farmers, or even a commuter to a nearby city, he is still aware of the seasons of planting and the time of harvest.

This awareness of seasons also has its application to the life of our churches. It is so easy for a denomination to decide that a certain year is the year of stewardship emphasis, or the year of leadership training, or the year of visitation evangelism. In spite of the fact that I am cooperative with, and appreciative of, our American Baptist Convention, as a pastor I have sometimes chafed under these "year of special emphasis" programs. Very often my church was not ready for the emphasis of that year, but a year or two later entered the program with real effectiveness, and genuine fruitful results. There are activities and programs most appropriate to a single church in its own seasons of growth and development.

Because the rural man knows he lives in a world of seasons and cycles, he can face adversity and say, "This too shall pass." If the hail or the drought takes a crop one year, the next season for planting he plants another crop. Out of this wisdom of experience, the rural man never expects either prosperity, or recession, or depressions to last forever. He knows that good times and bad alike, both come and go. Therefore he has a calmness about life worth communicating to the rest of society.

Mr. Clingan is the pastor of the McLean Community Church, Inc., McLean, New York. This address was given at the Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Kansas, March 1959.

Honesty in Human Relations

The rural man also knows the value of honesty in human relationships more clearly than many other segments of our society. This is because his relationships are of necessity personal. The city markets have always said, "Let the buyer beware." The rural merchant and tradesman has said to himself, "Let the seller be careful," because he knows he must continue to live at close range with the people to whom he has sold his product or his services. In our rural communities we cannot escape each other. A man's dishonesty to his neighbor soon becomes common knowledge. This is not to say that the rural man is essentially more honest than his urban counterpart. He is just as likely to be dishonest with the man from another community, or the man passing through. But with the people of his own community he is painfully aware of the importance of honesty in all his dealings.

For a number of years Lincoln Kelsey helped train agricultural extension workers at Cornell University. He was also an active churchman, in both his own Congregational church and the interdenominational Rural Church Institute at Ithaca. I once heard him state that he believed there was a correlation between church life and agricultural prosperity. His reasons were that modern agriculture depends for its life and prosperity upon a great deal of credit transaction. Credit can flow only where there is a sustaining religious faith. Religious faith is sustained only by strong, effective Christian churches. The rural man who thinks it through sees the obvious importance of honesty. Our entire society needs more honesty. Let people who live where its importance is obvious clarify their witness at this point, and share it with the rest of society.

People Are Important

Since coming to Central Seminary, one of the students here has told me of his decision, made some time ago, to enter the rural ministry. A major reason in his decision was the fact that a rural pastor may know the entire person. He does not know just a segment of a man's life, or a person in a particular role a certain day of the week. He truly has the opportunity to know the entire person. If he doesn't know the man, he may be sure that the rest of his community does. The people who make up our rural communities know that people are important. In this day of mass communication and concepts of stereotypes and organization men, there is the need for a recovery of the sense of a person and his own individual personal worth. This need has been pointed up by Morris Bishop writing in *The New Yorker:*

THE PERFORATED SPIRIT

by Morris Bishop

© 1955, *The New Yorker* Magazine, Inc.

The fellows up in Personnel,
They have a set of cards on me.
The sprinkled perforations tell
My individuality.

And what am I? I am a chart
Upon the cards of I.B.M.
The secret places of the heart
Have little secrecy for them.

It matters not how I may prate.
They punch with punishment my scroll.
The files are masters of my fate.
They are the captains of my soul.

Monday my brain began to buzz;
I was in agony all night
I found out what the trouble was:
They had my paper clip too tight.

Halford E. Luccock of Yale Divinity School has truly said, "We are in a time and in a world where the importance of the individual is suffering a terrible shrinking. . . . We are in an increasingly impersonal world. The shadow of automation, a world in which practically everything will be done by machinery hangs over us. This is getting to be oppressively true in offices as well as in factories. . . . Consequently there never was a time when our gospel of the love of God for each person was so desperately needed or so widely welcomed. Our gospel is that each person has a unique and eternal place in the mind and heart of God. . . ."

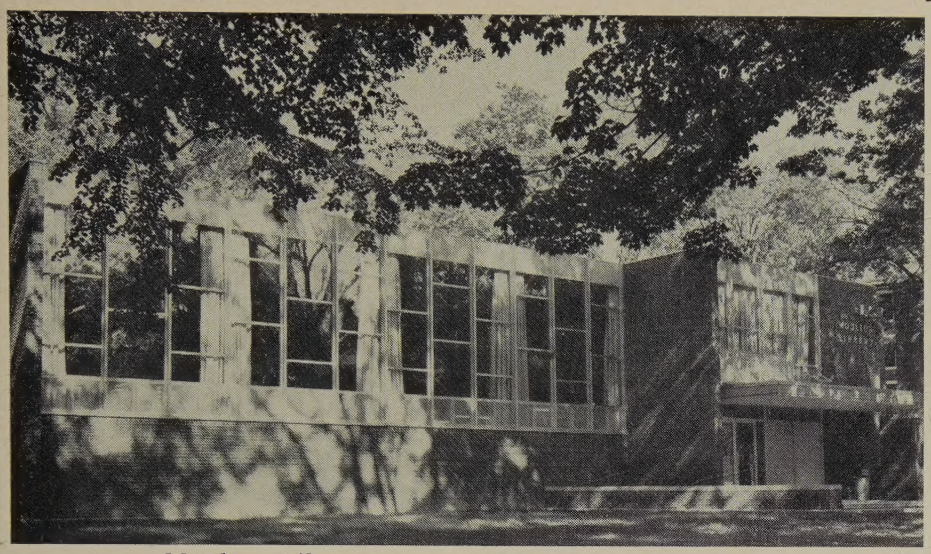
There is the story of a child in an orphanage who was asked what it wanted above everything else in the world. If it had one wish that it could be sure would come true, what would that wish be. The child answered, "Someone who would come to the door of the orphanage, and ask for me by my name." He wanted to be known as a person. The small communities of our land, where relationships are so personal, need to communicate to our society that people are not expendable, that persons are important.

A Vital Faith in God

I am sure that all of you share with me my conviction that a necessity of our time, with high priority, is a mature, vital faith in God. For one, I do not believe it is any easier to be a Christian in the country than in the city. Statistics indicate that a higher percentage of city people attend church than do the people who make up our rural communities. Under the impact of the secular thinking of our day, there are as many atheists in the country as in the city, if not more! At the same time, we must recognize that a vital, mature Christian faith will be related to the backgrounds with which the rural man is familiar. Remember how the Psalmist said, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come? My help comes from the LORD who made heaven and earth." It is this same God, the creator, who disclosed himself supremely in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Granted that these ideas are more easily grasped by the rural man, how do we communicate these ideas to others? The other day someone asked Shirley Greene how he was going to get one of his creative ideas accepted. He countered by asking, "Do you believe in it yourself?" This is the first requirement in the business of communicating ideas. If a person is to communicate a sense of values, wise insights, or basic ideas about the meaning of life, he must be possessed by them himself! God help us to be possessed by the ideas he would have us communicate to our generation. ■ ■

Convocation on the Church in Town and Country —



Moulton Library—Bangor Theological Seminary

Northeast and Canada

Hammond St. Congregational Church
and
Bangor Theological Seminary
Bangor, Maine

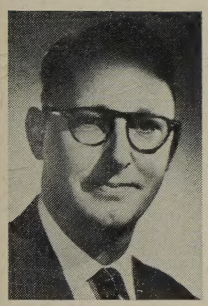
Tuesday, September 26, 2:00 P.M.
through
Thursday, September 28, 12:00 NOON

REGISTRATION
Hammond St. Congregational Church
Tuesday, 10:00 A.M.—2:00 P.M.

THEME: *Power and Strategy for the Mission*

PROGRAM

Devotions for each session by the Rev. Allen W. Clark, editor of "Home Prayers"—The spiritual implications of each presentation by Dr. David S. King, of the Amherst Laymen's Academy for Ecumenical Studies. Other reactors, including an executive, pastor, and layman for each presentation, and opportunities for discussion and questions will be available.



HERB STOTTS

TUESDAY

2:30 P.M.—"An Overview of the Northeast" by Professor Herb Stotts, Boston University.

3:30 P.M.—"Social Problems in Town and Country Churches" by Professor Louis Ploch, University of Maine.

7:30 P.M.—"Food for Peace" by Mr. James Symington, The White House, Washington, D. C.

CHARLES BETTS

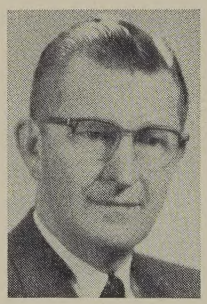
JAMES SYMINGTON

WEDNESDAY

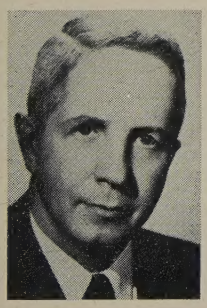
9:00 A.M.—"The Local Church with a World-Wide Concern" by Dr. Kenneth G. Neigh, United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

1:30 P.M.—"Economics and the Town and Country Church" by the Rev. Father G. Topshee, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

7:30 P.M.—"The Small Church Building and Program" by Mr. Charles J. Betts, consulting architect for the Disciples of Christ.



JOHN BAKER

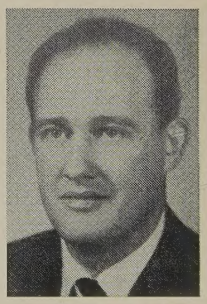


KENNETH NEIGH

THURSDAY

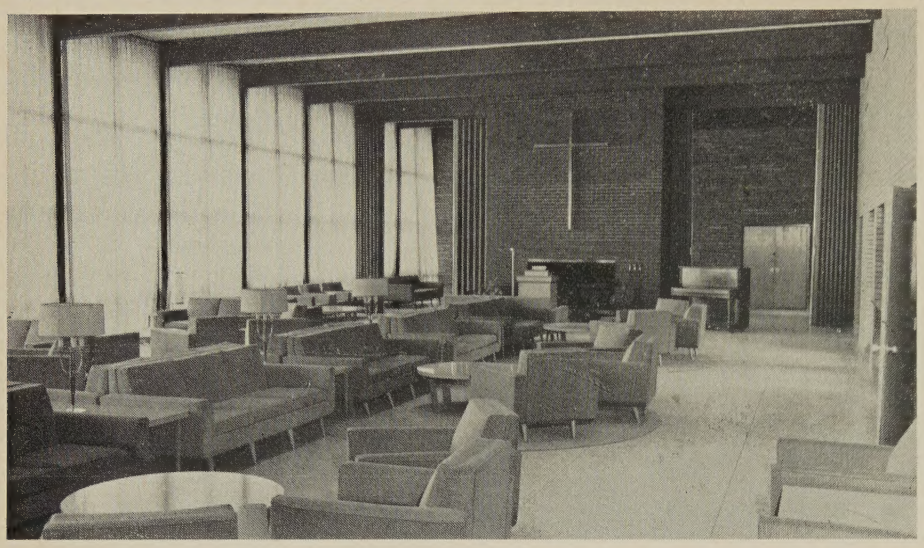
9:00 A.M.—"Creative Rural Area Development" by Mr. John Baker, Federal Extension Service, U.S.D.A.

"Horizons of Hope" by Dr. Henry A. McCanna, Town and Country Department, National Council of Churches.



HENRY McCANNA

Convocation on the Church in Town and Country —



Lakeview Central Building Lounge

South Central

Lakeview Methodist Assembly
Route 5, Palestine, Texas

Tuesday, October 17, 2:00 P.M.
through
Thursday, October 19, 12:00 NOON

REGISTRATION
Central Building
Tuesday, 10:00 A.M.—2:00 P.M.

THEME: *Power and Strategy for the Mission*

TOPICS

The Role of the Church and Church Planning in the Midst of Transition
Professor Robert L. Skrabanek, Texas A & M College
Dr. Franklin E. Rector, Christian Theological Seminary

Sociological and Theological Motivations for Church and Ministry
Professor Marvin T. Judy, Perkins School of Theology

Ministries to Minorities
Miss Betty Whitaker, National Council and Texas Council of Churches

Creative Rural Area Development
Mr. Phillip Aylesworth, Federal Extension Service
Mr. John Grigsby, Oklahoma Extension Service

The Peace Corps
Mr. Bill D. Moyers, Associate Director

BILL MOYERS

The Peace Corps and the Heifer Project

by Thurl Metzger

• For centuries it has seemed that the apocalyptic steeds could never be brought under control. In fact, those named famine and war have threatened to stampede. Their strength is multiplied, for they are feeding on population explosions, nationalism, ballistic missiles, and fear. There is now the possibility that these run-away horses may be slowed by the pull of the Peace Corps.

Probably no one is under the illusion that the total achievements of a maximum corps working for a decade will be enough to erase the hard hoof prints of these frantic animals. But it may be that the human spirit will be released in such proportions that we will never again experience the same sense of futility. We may have finally found what William James called "a moral equivalent to war."

The crust of national negativism once cracked by top-level action permitted an overwhelming eruption of the human spirit to rise to positive action. A flood of volunteers from all over the United States and from other countries (e.g. England, Germany, Canada) followed and channels for this ocean of energy are being created.

Heifer Project has channels for this concern and is offering them to the proper officials in the government for their consideration. We believe that many who have so generously supported this program will consider serving somewhere in the field and we invite you to write them of your interest.

Anti-Americanism in Ecuador ran high at the time of the recent decision on the Peru-Ecuador border dispute. Most U.S. citizens feared for their lives and property. One was completely safe. He was Don Schultz whose home is in Burlington, Iowa. Don is loved by Ecuadorians of all classes. His nationality is secondary in their minds, for Don is Heifer Project's Ecuadorian director. The mercy and concern he expresses is of the Lord. Don is one of Heifer Project's army of concern. Your membership in Fellowship of Concern helps provide funds for such men as Don. Five different memberships are available: red, $25; blue, $50; white, $100; silver, $500; gold, $1,000. Send to FOC, Box 278, Upper Darby, Pennsylvania. (Income tax deductible. Credit available to your church and organization.) ■ ■

Mr. Metzger is executive director of Heifer Project, Inc.

The Church's Place in Rural Development

by

William Davidson

• Is your church most interested in carrying on as it always has, or is it seeking ways of changing its program? This is a key question relative to the role of the church in the development of any community, especially one which is small, definable geographically, and self-contained. Dr. Everett Rogers of Ohio State University quotes a rural church leader as saying: "We've got to impress rural church people that this world is changing. And too many of us are not even aware that changes are taking place. A rural church that isn't changing to suit the times is like a car that is out of date. It will soon wind up on the junk heap. We've got junk-heap churches all over." That is why it is important to ask if we are attempting to change. Someone else has said: "If you are doing the same thing as you did yesterday, it really isn't the same thing: because both you and the circumstances have changed."

The old rural community has gone and a new one is in its place. Some of our definitions must still be tentative about the new community, but it is here to stay, and as the church takes its rightful place in this community it cannot afford to be the church of yesterday. All too often the church failed to meet the needs of the old community, so it is certain that it must have the "new look" and, more especially, the new approach if it fulfills the requirements of today.

C. S. Lewis has said "We live in a post-Christian era—every major drive of our modern culture is non-Christian." We may not agree entirely, but there is much truth in the statement. It points up the seriousness of considering the church's place in community development. If every major drive is non-Christian that makes the church a minority, even though in most places a much greater percentage of persons claim church membership than those who do not. Since we are primarily concerned with rural communities it is also worth emphasizing that the percentage of our national population living in rural communities is on a steady decline and will soon be less than 10 per cent. For another generation there will be lots of city-dwellers who grew up in the country, but as time goes on there will be fewer and fewer people everywhere who have any concept of what a town and country community is. This means that we not only have a less and less Christian society in terms of deep commitment, we also have a less and less rural society. For the Christian church in rural America these are sobering facts.

But that brings us back to the new look. How can the town and country church be more effective in itself and in its community. I want to say just four things:

1. Let the church cease its pre-occupation with the church as an institution.

This is basic. The church is meant to be a moving, living thing—an organism that grows and develops—a redemptive force to bring men and communities to salvation in Christ—and the church is his body, completely subject to his will. We believe all these things, but how does the church act? Have you ever tried to move a church? or a stained glass window? or a cemetery? Have you ever suggested the elimination of a women's group or tried to redirect its energies? or interfere with the system of appointing or electing church officials? At all costs the institution of the church must be maintained and improved if possible.

Please don't misunderstand, however. You cannot do away with organization, that would be chaos. But let us let the organization work for us rather than our ending up working for it—in ways we would rather not. Our Lord contended against the stuffy, tradition-bound, cumbersome Judaism—the church of his day. "It has been said . . ."—"But I say unto you" was his way of putting it. So then, it has been said that the church must exist as it does in many of our rural communities today; yet, perhaps, we can hear our Lord saying, "But I say unto you . . . blind guides, Pharisees, hypocrites!" I say unto you let the church be the church of this day and this generation with new brightness—again the light of the World, and not the taillight for the people who live in town and country America today.

2. Let the church take advantage of the proven methods of strengthening its influence in *and service* to *the entire community.*

The church in the small town has a unique opportunity to be the leaven in the lump of community life for all people and groups instead of just a filling station where some few come, week by week, to get their little pint bottles filled in order to go back to their homes and lives, further insulated from reality

William Davidson

The Rev. William Davidson is associate secretary of the town and country work division of the Home Department, National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

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and need than they were when they came.

A few years ago a conference was held between representatives of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and rural church leaders of most denominations to discover the areas where the church could bring leadership in community development. They listed three points.

Churches may: (1) aid in developing wholesome community relations, (2) help the community discover its recreational and cultural needs and provide services and programs to meet these needs, and (3) aid the community in appraising its needs and potentialities in agriculture and family living so that the service of other agencies equipped to render service at this point can be utilized. This is far from the thoughts or abilities of many rural churches as now constituted, but changes towards such capabilities are the great necessity of many rural churches today. It is true of some rural churches, of course, that they are already readjusted here. The Rural Development Program of the Department of Agriculture and other agencies of government cooperating discovered that rural churches in some instances initiated the Rural Development Program locally, and in many more instances cooperated widely with it after community leaders—many of them churchmen—got it started. No church need say that it does not know how to go about rural community development. There are examples of how it can be done if they want to do it.

3. Let the church develop concerned and committed leadership.

This means both ministers and other leaders—both are important, but I believe the ministerial leadership carries most weight (sometimes literally) or, perhaps I should say, does more damage or gives more help to community development, depending upon the degree of their concern and commitment. Many rural church leaders simply do not understand their role or understand the community; but that is less bothersome than their lack of concern and commitment.

They can learn to understand if they want to. There are excellent opportunities, denominationally, interdenominationally, and non-denominationally in most places around the country, but none of these will do any good if the will and enthusiasm to learn and put into practice is not there.

Robert Spike in *Safe and Bondage* wrote: "Either a minister ought to conceive of his role as one that involves him deeply in the power structure of the community or he ought not to be there. If he is simply chaplain to small town superficialities and personal gratification, then he will never be involved enough in the community to seek its redemption." Every town and country clergyman needs to ask himself if he is thought of as a permanent member of the community or just someone passing through—in fact, he needs to consider how he thinks of himself in this regard. This speaks to the degree of his concern and commitment and says a great deal about his effectiveness as a leader of the church, a leader of his church leaders, and a leader of his community. Without concerned and committed leaders the church can hardly hope to make an impact on the development of the community.

4. Finally, let the church get away from parochialism and small-mindedness.

The characteristic of rural people seems to be their individuality: their desire to be independent and somewhat isolationist. There is something admirable about their qualities, but in the new rural society there is little room for such behavior. Whether we like it or not we are next door neighbors to the whole world; and whether we like it, or even believe it, the influence of mass media has had its effects on even the most isolationist among the individuals of the rural community. Perhaps we in the church can build on this and use it to help broaden the concept of the church's role in community development.

Robert Spike in another context says: "Ancestor-worshipping churches (and these are quite likely to be parochial-minded) need an introduction to the entire range of their spiritual progenitors. That is, they need to be aware of more than great grandfather and his neighbor who bought that stained glass window. They need also to be aware of the whole living fabric of church history into which we are all knit."

A very great percentage of the world's population is living in a rural community setting. If the command of Jesus to "go into all the world" is to be effective (at least in human terms) it needs the inspiration of the town and country church at home seeing beyond its own horizons to its brothers and sisters living in villages and open country in other nations. Some town and country churches have an excellent record at this point, but much more could be done by all of us. Curiously enough, the state of rural church at home has an important effect on the whole church's witness abroad and among the uncommitted nations.

"The rest of the world," says Dr. Richard Comfort, "is saying to those of us in the United States,

'Why don't you practice what you preach?' We are helping to lift the level of living around the world through the United Nations, the international cooperative associations, and many more agencies [but] money and technical assistance are not enough. The people of the world are looking for an example of how we help to lift the living standards of our own people. They are interested as well in the moral and spiritual basis of these assistance programs." The church with concerns no bigger than its own family, regardless of its capabilities and potential to meet such concerns, is next to useless in community development, because today's community is the world and all its people.

The church has a place in rural development today, but it is necessary, if the church fulfills its role, that it have a new look. I have suggested four characteristics of this different approach: (1) eliminate preoccupation with the church as an institution, (2) learn from accepted methods how to enter into community development, (3) develop concerned and committed leadership both ministerial and lay, and (4) enlarge the vision of community to include the world and all the people in it. This is only a partial list, but as you continue to be engaged for the church in rural community development perhaps this may be a helpful guide as you struggle with the answer to my opening question: Is your church most interested in carrying on as it always has, or is it seeking ways of changing its program? ■ ■

A most thorough and greatly needed *"Guide for the Development of a New Church"* has been prepared by Richard S. McCarroll, secretary, personnel and program department of new church development and building council for the Board of National Missions of the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. The principles set forth will be helpful to any church seeking to "raise up children" and certainly every church extension administrator (Presbyterian or otherwise) will need to be most familiar with this material.

CHURCH RENEWAL

A Call to the Church in Town and Country to Renewal and Service

The rural communities of America are the scene of vast and far-reaching changes. Technological advances in agriculture, transportation, and communication, shifts in economic and occupational patterns, and transition in social institutions have combined to make rural America truly an arena of rapid social change.

The recent Town and Country Convocation of the United Church of Christ at Oberlin, Ohio, addressing itself to the theme "Christian Witness in Rural Revolution," has aroused an active concern that the church in town and country shall speak relevantly and persuasively to such a time as this.

Confronted by such an opportunity the joint town and country committees of the United Church of Christ have adopted a two-pronged emphasis for the quadrennium, 1960-1964.

The Renewal of the Church in Town and Country phase of the emphasis speaks to a deeply-felt need in the interior life of the church as the fellowship of the people of God. The goals of fellowship, worship, service, and witness toward which we strive as well as the fine programs and methods which we advocate wait for their achievement upon a fundamental experience of renewal within the churches and in the hearts of Christian men and women.

Renewal involves a re-thinking of the meaning of the church and a recommitment to the mission of the church on the part of both clergy and laity. Out of such an inner experience of renewal may be expected, through the power of God's holy spirit released in the churches, new vitality and effectiveness in all the ministries of the church.

The Town and Country Church Understanding and Serving Its Community. Spiritual renewal must not, indeed cannot, remain a private or an internal experience in the life of the church. The spiritually alive church is a witnessing and a serving church. Because its roots are deep in the life of prayer and discipline, its fruits are abundant and varied in the common life. The renewed church is a radiant church.

The second phase of our emphasis addresses itself to the responsibility of the church in town and country to study and understand its community, to work for an ecumenical Christian witness to the whole life of the community, and to minister courageously and intelligently to the needs of the community.

In announcing the two-fold emphasis, we call upon all the churches of our united fellowship which are located in town and country communities to join with national, conference, and synod leadership in a commitment of ourselves to pray, to study, and to act as churches which are wholly yielded instruments of God's redemptive will as revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.—ROMANS 12:2

Signed for the joint town and country committees:

MRS. FRED BERRY
DR. VICTOR OBENHAUS

BOOK REVIEWS

Edge of the Edge, Theodore E. Matson, Friendship Press. 1961. 166 pages. Paper, $1.50; cloth, $2.95.

Edge of the Edge has already been widely acclaimed. And it deserves to be! It has been made a study book of various groups and organizations. And it deserves that, too! For it will stir not only the individual to a more vital understanding of his privilege and mission as a Christian, but it will awaken any congregation anywhere which will follow its suggestions and lead it on in the desire, under Christ, really to be a church for its community. Having served a parish in the most densely populated city of our land, this reviewer is personally aware of and sensitive to the message of this book.

First of all, it must be said that it is extremely well written. The vigorous style that characterizes the entire book reveals the deep earnestness of the author, his wide reading on the subject, his contacts with leaders in the field, his own experiences as pastor in a large city, and his responsibility as the director of the Board of American Missions of the Augustana Lutheran Church.

In this volume we find analysis and diagnosis. No sector of the church has escaped his observation and attention, whether it be the downtown church of a great metropolis, the mushrooming church in suburbia, or the rural church—each with its own acute problems. The writer applies his scalpel in the spirit of the surgeon, always with the purpose that the pruning may result in a richer harvest for the kingdom of God.

For there is also synthesis and prescription, as ways for improvement and wiser procedure are presented and case after case related in which the congregation has found its place as a part of the Church Universal and is performing its God-given and fruitful ministry to the people of its community, notably in chapters 7, 8, and 9.

Dr. Matson says that effective church planning "is a partnership in obedience to the command of Christ to preach the gospel to *everyone.* If this obedience is lacking, the partnership lacks that which the structure cannot give" (97-98). "The congregation cannot decide whether or not it will effect the life in its community. It does so by its very existence; by its physical presence; by its worship, teaching, action; and by the everyday life and activity of its members. It is the front line, the cutting edge against the world. If it is to minister, and not be ministered to, it must take the form of a servant. . . ."

—V.E.B.

Pilgrim Circuit Rider, Leila W. Anderson, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960, $4.00.

Leila Anderson grew up in a "twelve-mile world," centering around her Illinois farm home and bounded by the local church and a one-room schoolhouse. Today, as the famous Pilgrim Circuit Rider for the Congregational Church, she finds that the world is her parish. The story of her adventurous and inspiring life is related with warmth and humor.

The early years of study, teaching, and travel among small churches, plus a number of summers in the American Youth Foundation Camps' training program, study, and ordination at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, and a world-wide trip to mission stations became the foundation for this modern-day circuit rider.

Miss Anderson has completed nationwide circuits which have taken her to Indian reservations in the Northwest, down the length of California, across the whole South, up the Eastern seaboard, to the white-steepled churches of New England. Her country wisdom, plain talk, and understanding heart turned many a struggling church into a vital congregation.

Pilgrim Circuit Rider is not only the story of one woman's unusual life. It also portrays, through the lives of the people Miss Anderson met, the dramatic change in American life as a rural society attempts to meet the challenge of urbanization, conserving the best of the past and venturing bravely into the future. Moreover her description of the evolving theory, methods, and practices of religious education in the local church will be of great value to all interested in the church school.

Rev. William C. Nelson writes, "This is one book I should have had in my student pastorate. I saw so many 'idea sparkers' that would have helped solve many of the problems that I had to face in my immature way. It was like a fresh breath to see how Leila Anderson would start a small group asking themselves, 'why they were doing what they were doing,' and then to find them developing a philosophy of Christian education that was tailored for them, meeting the needs of their situation."

"SPOKESMAN FOR RURAL CHRISTIANITY . . ."

• The readership of TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH will be genuinely pleased, we are certain, to learn that Shirley E. Greene was awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa,* at the commencement services of Chicago Theological Seminary, June 8, 1961.

President Howard Schomer of the Seminary, in conferring the degree, said: "Shirley Edward Greene, Interpreter of the Larger Church to the Church at the Crossroads, Spokesman for Rural Christianity amidst an urban culture; defender of migrants and other readily forgotten people; salty exponent of Christian Social Action."

All of us will rejoice with Shirley and his family, to whom this honor in the service of Christ's Church is justly due.

SERGE F. HUMMON

Worthy Recognition

Our picture of Clifford Samuelson is unique from two standpoints: First, it captures his state of shock at the moment of opening Bishop Horstick's "bail bag" of money, given by friends from throughout the United States and Canada; and second, it is a picture taken of *Clifford Samuelson rather than* by *him —for as a "shutter bug" he has few equals.*

The Rev. Mr. Samuelson was honored at the National Episcopal Conference on the Church in Town and Country at Roanridge, Parkville, Missouri, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of his leadership in the Episcopal town and country church movement.

In responding to the recognition and especially the gift, our dear friend, Cliff, felt it should not be done for "we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." (Luke 17:10.)

Nevertheless, ". . . the laborer is worthy of his reward" (I Tim. 5:18), and inasmuch as there certainly has not been any more faithful and creative laborer than Clifford Samuelson, the recognition had to stand and the money had to be received. All of us join in this tribute, and we earnestly pray the next twenty years will be even more productive.

—H.A.M.

"Church at Warren" Cited by Educational Film Library Association

• The Town and Country office of the United Church of Christ in St. Louis is proudly displaying a plaque which cites the filmstrip "The Church at Warren" as a 1961 blue-ribbon award winner in competition among more than 250 short movies and filmstrips. This award was announced at the American Film Festival held in April in New York City. Conducted by the Educational Film Library Association, this festival is the occasion for presentation of the "Oscars" in the educational film and filmstrip field. More than 650 producers, distributors, educators, and film users registered for the four-day festival.

Credit for the recognition accorded to "The Church at Warren" belongs primarily to the Rev. Porter Bower and the United Church Bureau of Audio-Visuals, and to Arthur Mokin Productions. They developed and produced the strip, based on material from Chapter 5 of Shirley Greene's *Ferment on the Fringe.*

Have you used "The Church at Warren" in your church? ■

THE MISSION TO THE CHURCH

(*Continued from page* 6)

tious goals we cherish for our rural churches, and most of the tools and techniques which we long to see used by them, await their realization upon a very fundamental experience of 'renewal' within the churches themselves." Such renewal involves a re-thinking of the meaning and message of the church and a re-study of and a recommitment to the mission of the church on the part of leadership, both clergy and laity.

Again quoting Mr. Greene, "Too many of our churches, too much of the time, are victims of institutional inertia, traditional patterns, habitual responses. We have almost wholly failed to grasp the excitement of the Christian faith as implied in Paul's admonition, 'Be aglow with the Spirit.' Without renewal, the most loyal of congregations, led by the finest of ministers, following the best techniques, continue to limp, languish, and fail. Our need, clergy and laity alike, is to be 'transformed by the renewal of the mind.' "

Accompanying this placing of ourselves at the disposal of the Holy Spirit (for God alone can renew the church), is an effort to understand and serve the community. The church has a mission which must be accomplished in the context of contemporary society. We speak to men and women who live in society. Church people must understand the community in which and to which they seek to bear effective witness. They must ever be ready to be "the servant of all." Your town and country church leadership has prepared and offers you some very good tools for community study. Use them!

Let us say it again: It must ever be our desire to make ourselves available to the Holy Spirit so that he may renew the church through us, if he chooses, so that our congregation will be the church in our community for this age and for the next.

Our prayer should ever be: "Spirit of the living God, pour thyself on me, melt me, mould me, fill me, use me, when and where and how thou wilt, Spirit of the living God, pour thyself on me!" ■ ■

CLARENCE JORDAN

• Clarence Jordan was born, mainly educated, and continues to live in Georgia, but the light that shines from Americus has become a guide to countless multitudes throughout the United States and the world.

He has a B.S. in Agriculture from the University of Georgia and both the Master of Theology and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from the Southern Baptist Seminary. After graduation he worked four years in the slums of Louisville, Kentucky, and pastored two country churches.

In 1942, he helped begin and is the present director of Koinonia Farm, Americus, Georgia. *Koinonia* is a Greek word meaning fellowship and from it is derived the word, community.

Clarence Jordan has been heard by countless numbers of people inasmuch as he is in continual demand as a speaker and counselor. His speaking is a rare combination of Greek scholarship and the practical imagery of a dirt farmer—and anyone who has ever heard him can never forget the experience.

Dr. Jordan is the author of the 1961 Harvest Festival bulletin. ■ ■

The Sound of a Dove

by

Clarence Jordan

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him . . . "for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."—MATTHEW 3:13-15

• It was characteristic for Jesus to be careful about the details of righteousness and so he submitted to the baptism of John. However, John almost made the usual blunder of prophets when he tried to dissuade Jesus from this experience because he was a "big shot."

But then John had another problem which has continued to plague prophets even to the present. This problem is the attempt to force people into the kingdom—or to mistake the way in which the kingdom is manifested. John was certainly aware that the Spirit of God decended on Jesus, but he overlooked the significance of its coming as a dove—quietly.

This was not the end of his shortsightedness, because we note it was hard for him to get out of the way and turn loose when the kingdom came. "Are you he who is to come or shall we look for another?" (Matt. 11:3) John had begun to deteriorate in his legalistic alliance with the Pharisees—as is the result of all such mergers.

The ministry of healing was to be the main validation of Jesus's role as a prophet, but those who would gain the kingdom by violent means would hardly be satisfied with this, another display of quietness.

Jesus looked upon John as a high-minded, socially conscious prophet —yet with all his greatness he lacked the one essential item, love! "no one greater than John . . . ; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matt. 11:11)

Everyone up to John (and far too many since) gave the wrong idea in attempting to snatch the kingdom by violence: ". . . men of violence take it by force." (Matt. 11:12)

The kingdom of God is often pulled apart by high-minded people. There have been many who wanted to turn Koinonia Farm merely into an integration movement. No doubt the kingdom must be built solidly on justice, but it cannot end there. Jesus and John drew apart largely because John was in too much of a hurry and too quick to compromise in the use of force to gain his ends —ends which were worthy, but which became wrong through the use of unworthy means. Later in his ministry, Jesus went through Samaria, not as a test case, but as a part of his normal business!

Certainly the need for social justice is obvious in our time—but it was even more needed in Jesus's time! Let us not fall prey to the deception that we can legislate righteousness and especially justice because we are all worked up in a moment of zeal, when our normal reactions are apathetic. "He who has ears to hear. . . ." (Matt. 11:15) Jesus likened his generation to children in the market place, piping to those who refuse to dance—and are we any different? Men or their societies cannot be forced into the kingdom, and thereby be made righteous. The ultimate solution lies only in the power of love—and that in a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest . . . *I am gentle and lowly in heart* . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30) ■ ■